

APPENDIX F

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

F.1 Who answers questions about an award?

Questions on technical matters prior to an award should be addressed to the NASA program officer listed in the original NRA. Questions on technical matters after an award are addressed to the Technical Monitor identified on the cover page of the award document. Questions about administrative and budgetary matters are addressed to the NASA Award (i.e., Grants or Contracting) Officer. The PI's institutional research/grants office will know this point of contact from the official award document. It is important for the PI to know the various points of contact, including his/her institution's research/grants office, the NASA Award Officer, the NASA Technical Monitor, and/or the NASA program officer. Note that the NASA Technical Monitor and program officer may be the same person.

F.2 Is all the information needed to submit a proposal contained in the NRA?

Starting with the formal publication of this Guidebook, a NRA will only contain information specific to the technical description of that one advertised program. The NRA will then refer prospective proposers to this Guidebook for all common or "default" requirements, policies, procedures, and formats to be used for proposals unless specifically exempted otherwise in the NRA. It is the intention of NASA to restrict exceptions to these standards to items that are unique to a given NRA.

F.3 Who is responsible for what?

The Principal Investigator is expected to provide scientific and technical leadership for the proposed research and the timely publication of results. The PI's institution has responsibility for general supervision of all award activities, especially for all fiduciary matters, and also for notifying NASA of any significant problems relating to financial or administrative matters, including issues of scientific misconduct. NASA is responsible for the appropriate and timely review, selection, and funding of proposals submitted in response to the NRA and for monitoring the selected proposals during their periods of performance.

F.4 Who determines the type of award to be made?

For non-NASA recipients, NASA determines the appropriate funding instrument (a grant, a contract, or a cooperative agreement, an interagency agreement, or an intra-NASA funding instrument) for each Award based on the nature of the program for which the competition was held and the type of institution.

F.5 Who monitors an award?

An Award is monitored by the NASA Technical Monitor or the Contract Officer's Technical Representative, who serves as an official resource to the NASA Grants or Contract Officer, respectively. This person is knowledgeable about the technical aspects of the award and provides scientific and technical advice, including reviews of progress reports, to the Award Officer. The Award Officer has ultimate responsibility to ensure that the award is properly administered, including technical, cost, and schedule aspects.

F.6 Is it "my" award?

Although the PI usually originates and writes the proposal and has technical/scientific leadership of the work, NASA's funding awards are issued to the proposing institution and not to the PI personally. Although a PI may use the term "my grant" (or contract or cooperative agreement), the distinction between the PI and the grant recipient is real, and the PI should understand the various responsibilities for the administration of the award.

F.7 Must every proposal include certain documents?

Awards for financial assistance are subject to certain statutory and other general requirements, such as compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and other laws and regulations, e.g., prohibition of discrimination; prohibition of misconduct in science and engineering; requirements for a drug-free workplace; restrictions on lobbying; requirements for patents and copyrights; and the use of U.S.-flag carriers for international travel. The signature on the Cover Page of the proposal by the authorizing Institutional Representative certifies that the proposing institution is cognizant of and in compliance with all applicable certifications, which for information purposes are given in Appendix E of this Guidebook.

F.8 Once an award has been implemented, for what must prior approval be requested?

Prior approval requirements are set forth in the FAR, NFS and the NASA Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook. Several of the most common situations requiring prior written authorization from NASA are:

- transfer of the project to another institution at which the PI takes employment;
- a substantive change in objectives or scope of the project;
- a change in the designation of the PI or a substantial change in the PI's commitment of effort;
- new or revised allocations for purchase of equipment;
- the intent to award a subcontract in excess of \$100,000 or to purchase equipment in excess of \$5000 that was not part of the original budget; and/or
- novation or change of name actions

The recipient organization requests approval for such actions from the NASA Award

Officer, who often will ask for a recommendation from the cognizant Technical Monitor. However, only the NASA Award Officer can officially approve or deny such requests.

F.9 What happens if the PI changes institutions?

When a PI leaves his/her organization during the course of an award to that institution, that organization has the option of nominating an appropriately qualified replacement PI or recommending termination of the award. In the former case, NASA has the right of approval of the recommended replacement PI. If the replacement is approved, the award continues at the original institution through its nominal period of performance. However, if NASA judges that participation of the original PI is critical to the project owing to his/her unique knowledge and capabilities, then NASA will seek the agreement of both the original and the new institutions for the implementation a new award at the PI's new institution to complete the project.

F.10 Who owns any equipment purchased through the award?

Title to most equipment purchased or fabricated for the purpose of conducting research by an academic institution or other nonprofit organization using NASA funds normally vests with the recipient institution of the award. In some instances, NASA may elect to take title but, if so, the recipient will be notified of that intention when the purchase is approved by NASA. Title to equipment acquired by a commercial organization using Federal funds provided through any type of award vests with the Government.

F.11 Can an award be suspended or terminated?

The award document will contain procedures that define conditions for suspension or termination of awards. For example, lack of adequate progress in meeting the objectives of the award or failure to submit required reports set forth in the award document on a timely basis may be grounds for termination of an award. Awards may also be terminated by mutual agreement. In the event of a termination, the recipient is not entitled to expend any more funds except to the extent required to meet commitments that in the judgment of NASA had become firm before the effective date of the termination. A suspension of advance payments may also occur when a recipient demonstrates an unwillingness or inability to comply with financial reporting requirements. Where this occurs, the recipient institution would be required to finance its operations with its own funds, and NASA would reimburse the recipient institution's costs. Advance payments would be reinstated upon corrective action by the recipient institution.

F.12 Are there required reports?

The two types of technical reports generally required for grants are as follows, both of which are to be submitted through a specified World Wide Web site using a unique identification number that will be given to the PI:

YEARLY PROGRESS REPORT -- For multiple year awards, NASA requires that a brief progress report be submitted to the program officer 60 days before the anniversary date of the award, in order to allow for the timely recommendation for a continuation of funding.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH -- NASA requires a final summary of research report to be submitted to the NASA Awards Officer and the program officer for every award at the completion of the period of performance. This report should include substantive results from the work, as well as references to all published materials from the work and is due 90 days after the end of the award.

Other reports in addition to technical reports are required that include financial, property, invention or other specialized reports applicable for certain types of grants (such as education grants). The award document will include a complete list of required reports and schedules for their submission. Especially significant is the Federal Cash Transaction Report (SF 272) that is due at the end of each Federal fiscal quarter from the institution holding the award.

F.13 What is NASA's policy about releasing data and results derived through its sponsored research awards?

As a Federal Agency, NASA requires prompt public disclosure of the results of its sponsored research and, therefore, expects significant findings from supported research to be promptly submitted for peer reviewed publication, with authorship(s) that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved. Likewise, as a general policy and unless otherwise specified NASA no longer recognizes "proprietary" data rights; that is, all data collected through any of its funded programs are to be placed in the public domain at the earliest possible time following their validation and calibration. However, small amounts of data (for example, as might be taken during the course of a suborbital (rocket or balloon), Space Shuttle, or Space Station investigation) are usually left in the care of the Principal Investigator. In any case, NASA may require that any data obtained through a NRA award to be deposited in an appropriate public data archive as soon as possible after calibration and reduction. If so, NASA will negotiate with the PI for appropriate transfer of the data and, as necessary, may provide funds to convert the data into an easily used format using standard units.

F.14 How is NASA to be acknowledged in publications?

All publications of any material based on or developed under NASA sponsored projects should conclude with the following acknowledgement:

"This material is based upon work supported by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration under Grant/Contract/Agreement No. <xxxxxx> issued through the Office of XYZ <or ABC Program, as appropriate>."

Except for articles or papers published in peer-reviewed scientific, technical, or professional journals, the exposition of results from NASA supported research should also include the following disclaimer:

"Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article <or report, material, etc.> are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration."

Finally, without any exceptions all releases of photographic or illustrative data products must list NASA first on the credit line followed by the name of the PI organization, for example,

"Photograph <or illustration, figure, etc.> courtesy of NASA <or NASA Center managing the mission or program> and the <Principal Investigator institution>."

F.15 Can audits occur, and are they important?

Yes, Government auditors frequently check contracts, grants and cooperative agreements for evidence of fraud, waste, and/or mismanagement by the recipient organization. Therefore, it is important to keep clear and accurate records to avoid misunderstandings.

F.16 What are the uses of a No Cost Extension?

A No Cost Extension to an award allows the completion of the objectives for which the proposal was selected that have not been accomplished in the originally specified period of performance owing to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., the inability to hire a critically important graduate student or postdoctoral employee in time; the breakdown of a unique and critical piece of equipment; or the inability to coordinate important activities with Co-I's through circumstances beyond the control of the PI). A No Cost Extension is not to be implemented merely to use funds that are unspent because of the untimely planning of activities within the original period of performance. For a one time extension of a grant, the recipient must notify NASA in writing with the supporting reasons and revised expiration data at least 10 days before the expiration date specified in the award. For a contract, an appropriate request must be submitted for NASA's approval by the recipient institution. In either case, NASA will not accept requests for an augmentation to an award during a no cost extension, and any successor proposal that is selected will not be funded until a no cost extension has expired. See further details on No Cost Extensions in Section 3 of Appendix D of this Guidebook and paragraphs 1260.23 and 1260.1255(e)(2) of the Grants and Cooperative Agreements Handbook (see Appendix A for Web site).

F.17. Why are all these requirements and details about research awards necessary?

Funding for research using U.S. Federal monetary resources is a privilege accorded to U.S. institutions by NASA acting on behalf of the U.S. Congress and the public. The

recipient is legally obligated to use them appropriately and conscientiously to justify their continued appropriation through the Federal budget. This obligation necessarily entails attention to the details of how the award is competed and selected, and then how the selected activities are carried out, in order to provide public accountability of national resources throughout the process.

F.18. Why aren't all proposals that are highly rated by peer review selected for funding?

Although a proposal in response to a NRA may nominally be judged by peer review to be of intrinsically high merit, it still may not be selected owing to the programmatic issues of relevance to NASA's stated interests and/or limitations of the budget (see also Section 2 of Appendix C of this Guidebook). Regarding this latter factor, most of NASA's NRA's are oversubscribed by factors ranging typically from two to five, and at times can be even much higher. The entirety of the factors leading to a decision of selection or nonselection will be conveyed to the proposers during the course of a debriefing after selections are announced (see Section 6 of Appendix C).

F.19 Are proposals from NASA Centers subject to peer review, and are their budgets based on full cost accounting?

All proposals submitted in response to a NRA are subjected to exactly the same peer review process regardless of the submitting organization. In the near future, NASA is expecting to be operating on the basis of full cost accounting, which will be applicable to all research proposals submitted by its Centers and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory; this new accounting practice is being implemented as rapidly as possible.

F.20 Why is an award sometimes slow in being implemented after selection?

NASA is committed to implement awards within 46 days after selections are announced. However, sometimes additional materials are needed from the proposer (e.g., revised budgets and/or budget details) that can pace the activities that NASA must do to legally obligate Federal money; contracts and cooperative agreements with for-profit entities generally take longer owing to greater complexity. Finally, NASA's ability to distribute funds is dependent on the timely approval of its budget through the Federal budget process, which occasionally may be delayed.

F.21 Who may be listed as participating personnel on a proposal?

Every person who has agreed in writing (see Section 2.3.9) to perform a significant role in a proposed effort, even if at no cost, is entitled to be listed as a Co-I (see also Section 1.4.2). However, proposers are reminded that, since one of the nominal requirements for the Science/Technical/Management Section of a proposal is the justification of each key member of a proposal's team (see Section 2.3.4), then the stated contributions and qualifications of proposal personnel will be evaluated as part of the peer review process.